



UNITED STATES SENATE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
RANKING MEMBER TIM SCOTT

Ranking Member Tim Scott, Opening Statement

Hearing: An Economy That Cares: The Importance of Home-Based Services

Date: 03/23/22

Thank you Chairman Casey, and thank you to the witnesses for being with us today. This is such an important topic, and I'm so thankful that Chairman Casey has decided to make this one of our priorities for this day.

Without any question, you think about the fact that we have 46 million Americans today over the age of 65 living in the U.S., and just a few years from now, by the year 2050, that number will go from 46 million to around 90 million Americans. That is astounding growth that we should anticipate. By 2030, one in five Americans is projected to be 65 years or over.

Nearly 90 percent of our seniors want to stay in their own homes as they age.

To do this, seniors often turn to the support of family members ... 44 million Americans provide, every year, around 37 billion hours — “b” as in boy — billion hours of assistance to family members. That, to me, is astounding, and it's a number for us to digest, but it's really hard to understand how important staying in your own home is and the cost — maybe not just financial cost, but the human cost — of providing that care at 37 billion hours a year.

Family caregivers provide over 75 percent of caregiving here in the United States. That is a significant investment in our loved ones, and it's an important investment — one that we should take a look at and find ways to make that support better.

The Build Back Better proposal relies almost exclusively on funding long-term care through Medicaid. That path, of course, is going to be quite challenging for so many families. The qualifications for Medicaid [are a] significantly hard threshold to cross over, which requires you to eliminate most of your resources. So that means that we need to look for other solutions.

A better path forward would invest significant funding in a push for a self-directed care approach. This would give caregivers and recipients the means to make informed decisions about the services they need while providing resources to do so.

Last June, I released a report, “Expanding Opportunities for Older Americans: Self-Directed Home and Community Based Services.” We looked for solutions in the report so that we could understand and appreciate what actually would be beneficial for families providing those 37 billion hours on an annual basis.

And [one] of the solutions that we talked about was encouraging state Medicaid programs to establish self-directed care options. In addition to that, growing the long-term care insurance market... is a critical piece. The earlier you purchase this insurance coverage, the cheaper it is and the longer it will last for most American families.

Empowering the nation's volunteer army of 53 million family caregivers through sustainable funding [will] improve conditions for caregivers while enhancing service quality.

I have been around amazing caregivers my entire life frankly. My mother is a nurse's assistant. She's in her 49th year of full-time employment providing care. She loves what she does, so much so that it is, in fact, her mission. And so understanding and appreciating first-hand the struggles, the challenges, and the rewards of caregiving is undeniable in the household that I grew up in.

And, frankly, as I see my mother on the weekends when I'm back in town, she talks about how important it is for us to address this issue. It's one of the reasons why, Chairman Casey, I'm so thankful that we are having the hearing that we are today.

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